Pressrelease

50,000 Children to be vaccinated in northern Albania

Tirana, April 24th, 1999 - Starting from Friday April 23rd a vaccination campaign has been launched to reach all children in the region of Kukes and Krume in Northern Albania. The objective is to vaccinate up to 50,000 children aged from 6 months to 12 years in a period of just 5 days. Yesterday, 1740 children were vaccinated by the team of Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in Kukes. MSF is one of three organisations taking part in the campaign.

The vaccination campaign approved by Albanian health authorities has been prepared in close collaboration with the Albanian Ministry of Health. The vaccinations will be carried out by local health staff supervised by medical staff from MSF and two other organisations.

"Vaccinations against measles is a high medical priority for people living in precarious conditions like at present in northern Albania", says MSF-nurse Christina Schmit presently working with MSF in Kukes.

"Measles are extremely contagious and ten percent of the children who suffer from it can die in a very short time, as result of complications such as pneumonia, diarrhoea and croup", Christina Schmit adds.

"A vaccination-campaign like this is difficult to organise, because the vaccine has to be kept below 8 degrees Celsius during transport from manufacturer to the vaccination-post", explains Schmit. "Once the vaccination team is efficiently working, they are able to vaccinate 2-2,500 children per day".

MSF will carry out 4,400 vaccinations for children in 4 camps giving accommodation to 17,000 refugees. These are 2 Italian camps with 11,000 inhabitants, a Greek camp with 3,000 and an MSF camp with 3,000 inhabitants. MSF will also supply and supervise a vaccination post in the city centre of Kukes to vaccinate the children of the 100,000 refugees temporarily living with Albanian host families and in collective centres.

The Finnish Red Cross and Médecins du Monde are also participating in the vaccination programme. Vaccines are provided by Unicef.

Along with the measles immunisation programme children aged from 0 to 5 years will be vaccinated against polio.
Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) works in over 80 countries world-wide, and is dedicated to assisting vulnerable populations. MSF provides both life-saving emergency aid and longer-term assistance to make basic healthcare services available to the most vulnerable or excluded communities.

For further information please call: Medecins Sans Frontieres in Tirana, attn. B Tielens, mobile 00355-38 202 77 61.

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Tirana, April 24th, 1999 - Starting from Friday April 23rd a vaccination campaign has been launched to reach all children in the region of Kukes and Kruja in Northern Albania. The objective is to vaccinate up to 50,000 children aged from 6 months to 15 years in a period of just 8 days. Yesterday, 1,740 children were vaccinated by the team of Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in Kukes. MSF is one of three organisations taking part in the campaign.

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"Vaccinations against measles is a high medical priority for people living in precarious conditions like at present in northern Albania", says MSF-nurse Christine Schmidt currently working with MSF in Kukes.

"Measles are extremely contagious and ten percent of the children who suffer from it can die in a very short time, as result of complications such as pneumonia, diarrhoea and encephalitis", Christine Schmidt adds.

"A vaccination campaign like this is difficult to organise, because the vaccine has to be kept below 8 degrees Celsius during transport from manufacturer to the vaccination post", explains Schmidt. "Once the vaccination team is efficiently working, they are able to vaccinate 2-3,500 children per day."

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