



## Taking Action Against HPV and Cervical Cancer in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The Eastern Mediterranean Region Alliance on Non-Communicable Diseases is proud to join in celebrating the first celebration of [HPV Awareness Day](#) by increasing regional awareness of cervical cancer and promoting an understanding of how human papillomavirus (HPV) affects us all.

As a network of non-profit organizations advocating for non-communicable disease (NCD) prevention and control, including cervical cancer, we are deeply concerned about how little is being done to prevent cervical cancer within the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR).

Cervical cancer, caused by HPV, is a leading cause of cancer deaths in women worldwide, including many countries within the EMR. With [approximately 8,000 cervical cancer deaths](#) in the EMR 2012, and over 10,000 deaths predicted for 2020, it is critical for the Region to take immediate action to address HPV-related diseases and stop the rise of preventable cervical cancer deaths.

Since 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended that national immunization programs include the HPV vaccination. Despite the WHO's push to strengthen early detection of preventable cancers, including cervical cancer, insufficient prevention and control measures have been taken within the EMR. Only [9% of the entire Region](#) have HPV vaccination programs, a percentage that is unacceptably low.

Considering that the WHO has listed the HPV vaccination as a '[best buy](#)', as it is both cost effective and evidence-based, the EMR NCD Alliance calls for increased efforts from key decision makers to politically and financially commit to HPV screenings and vaccine uptake. There is an urgent need to increase political will and fight the barriers of stigma and misinformation. By implementing a comprehensive approach to increase awareness, screenings and vaccinations within the Region, rates of HPV-related diseases and cervical cancer mortality will decrease and more lives will be saved.

The health of women and children is crucial for a strong society and no family should suffer the health or financial hardships that come with cervical cancer. In 2018, we know how to effectively prevent, detect and treat HPV-related diseases and stop the rise of cervical cancer. It is time for key decision makers to put this knowledge into action and step up the fight against HPV-related diseases and cervical cancer.