

Recent news from WHO

- The severe **earthquake** that struck Haiti and the Dominican Republic on 12 January 2010 has caused tens of thousands of deaths and left many more people injured. The 7.0 magnitude earthquake destroyed large parts of the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, including many hospitals and health facilities as well as United Nations buildings, and several urban centres elsewhere in the country.
 - WHO has deployed more than 20 experts including specialists in mass casualty management, coordination of emergency health response, logistics and the management of dead bodies.
 - WHO is leading the health cluster response; coordinating closely with local authorities, United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners in the response operations. An early priority was to assess the risks of communicable and other diseases in the aftermath of the earthquake.
 - Other health priorities include needs assessments, search and rescue, trauma care for badly injured survivors, restoring health systems, making sure hospitals are up and running, setting up field hospitals, treating HIV/AIDS patients and restoring water and sanitation.
- A **polio vaccine** that is 30% more effective was used for the first time in an immunization campaign held from 15 to 17 December 2009 in Afghanistan. The bivalent oral polio vaccine that protects against both surviving serotypes (types 1 and 3) was given to 2.8 million children aged less than five years in a campaign funded by the Government of Canada. Most of Afghanistan is polio-free: 28 out of the 31 children paralysed by polio in 2009 came from 13 highly insecure districts where up to 60% of children miss out on vaccination.

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