

About This Issue



UNICEF/HQ05-0560/Boris Heger

An Ethiopian infant receives a polio immunization in the town of Shire in Tigray Region in 2005. The male health worker administering the vaccine was a member of a mobile vaccination team, delivering immunizations door-to-door. He was one of 100,000 volunteers responding to the reemergence of polio in Ethiopia in 2004.

Vaccines save lives and prevent disease. Immunizations spare children from crippling disabilities and afflictions that rob them of thriving adolescence and productive adulthood. Routine childhood immunization programs offer youngsters the opportunity for a healthier and more robust future. When healthy children mature to become active, industrious citizens, contributing to the well-being of their families and communities, their nation becomes a better place.

All this from a potion, injected or ingested in but a moment.

This unwavering theme echoes in the articles which follow, repeated like a chorus by government officials, doctors, nurses, social workers, and volunteers. Vaccines are the most successful and cost-effective way to prevent disease known to medical science.

The hard part is making sure that vaccines are delivered and immunizations are administered to the people who need them, wherever they live, whatever their station or economic circumstance.

The authors who have contributed to this publication are all devoted to that mission, and efforts they describe to achieve it have been dogged, unrelenting, and sometimes even heroic.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt introduces the topic, underscoring the United States' commitment to deliver the benefits of vaccines to regions where they are lacking. U.S. Agency for International Development Assistant Administrator Kent Hill describes the actions the nation has taken to build immunization programs in developing countries and its partnership with the international community to do more. Officials from the U.N. Children's Fund and the World Health Organization describe their vaccine programs, and prominent researchers discuss their hopes for further advancement of vaccine technology to prevent more diseases and ease the suffering they cause. ■

The Editors